

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at a Campaign Event With the United Auto Workers
January 24, 2024

Audience members. Joe! Joe! Joe!

The President. Hello, UAW!

Audience members. UAW! UAW! UAW!

The President. It's great to be home. One of the best unions in the world. You look out for one another. And the whole country—the whole country—benefits from what you do.

You know—please take a seat if you have one. *[Laughter]*

You're tough as they come, starting with your president, Shawn Fain, a leader with backbone, a backbone like a ramrod. I don't know where he is, but he is.

Together, we're proving what I've always believed: Wall Street didn't build America. The middle class built America, and unions built the middle class. That's a fact.

Look, I kept my commitment to be the most pro-union President ever, and I'm proud you have my back. Let me just say I'm honored to have your back and you have mine. That's the deal.

It comes down to seeing the world the same way. It's not complicated.

You know, my dad—who never went to college; who was the smartest, toughest, most gracious man I knew; who managed a car dealership for the bulk of my life—taught me a very important lesson. He'd say: "Joey"—this is the God's truth—"a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about decency. It's about your dignity. It's about your place in the community. It's about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going be okay,' and mean it—and mean it."

Folks, that's what the UAW is all about, and it's always been that way.

Just after the UAW was founded nearly 90 years ago, it launched what historians call the most important strike in the 20th century: Flint, 1936. Walter Reuther organized a sit-down in a factory.

They weren't sure what would happen. They were worried about getting beat up. But they were determined. They were determined. And it took 44 days, but they won the first collective bargaining victory in American history.

And the leadership of the UAW spread across the country and led to the first substantial wage increase in a long time, the first cost-of-living allowance, the first employer-provided health care. Within 4 years, workers across the entire auto industry unionized, inspiring workers across other industries as well, giving life to new industries in the labor movement.

I share that history with you because all of you made history again. I'm confident—and I mean this—90 years from now, people are going to look back on the impact you had—you in this room. Just like them 90 years ago, you matter now. You lead.

And I respect all of you here today. And you represent unions that always led, always lifted, and always inspired workers. The UAW legacy from Walter Reuther to Shawn Fain today—Shawn, you took a lot of heat, but you demonstrated extraordinary leadership. *[Applause]* You did.

And that's what I saw a few months ago during your historic UAW strike—the time—this time in Belleville, Michigan. And I'll say I was so damn proud to stand on that picket line with you. It's not the first—it's not the first UAW picket line I stood in. In my home State of Delaware, I've done it many times. But it's the first time a President did it, I found out later. *[Laughter]*

I've always fought for a strong auto industry, with UAW-built cars leading the world. This is what—it's about a simple proposition: You built these iconic companies. You built GM. You built—you built these companies. You sacrificed to save them in the worst of times. And you deserve to benefit when these companies thrive.

As Shawn said, record profits mean record contracts. I'm serious. And that's what you got: record wage increases, winning back cost-of-living adjustments, greater retirement security, more paid leave, and eliminating tiers. *[Laughter]* Whoa, whoa, whoa. *[Laughter]* You all know my position.

I'm tired—I've tried—you know, I'm tired about jobs going overseas, having products shipped to—look, during the Trump administration and a lot of administrations before that, what'd they do? So many—so many—people around America lost their sense of pride. Because whether it was an automobile company or any company at all, that factory that was there for 30 years. Hiring—they maybe only had 150 people in it, but it was a part of the community.

Guess what? Corporate America found the cheapest labor in the world, and they sent the jobs to those laborers and sent the product back to us. But not anymore. We're building product here and shipping it overseas. Buy America and build America. *[Applause]* I mean it. And what's really important, you made sure the auto future of the world will be made in America. Oh, I mean it.

You know, I'm going to digress just a second. Most people don't know that back in the thirties when Roosevelt was talking about the value of unions, he didn't just say unions are okay. He said any product that—in fact, that Congress—any money that Congress gives the President to spend, to build a product—whether it's an aircraft carrier, an automobile, a tanker, a staircase—no matter what that was, it should be built——

Audience member. [Inaudible]

Audience members. UAW! UAW! UAW!

The President. For——

Audience members. UAW! UAW! UAW!

The President. But for a long time—for a long time——

Audience members. UAW! UAW! UAW!

The President. For a long time, the Congress would make an appropriation and send it to the President to spend, whether it was building an aircraft carrier or staircase. And guess what? It was supposed to be built by an American worker with American products.

Well, guess what? I'm going back to that. We build in America, and we buy American.

And here is what you all did: You won commitments from the Big Three to create thousands of more jobs. So that's tens of billions more dollars. Building an auto future made in America.

It wasn't just about what you did for the UAW workers. The fact is, you've transformed the entire auto industry that's not yet unionized—or, as we call that, the "UAW bump."

Because of you, Toyota, Volkswagen, Nissan, Tulsa *[Tesla; White House correction]* all gave their workers double-digit raises. Because of you, workers across the country have seen the

largest wage increases for workers building cars and trucks and any other transportation equipment in nearly 30 years.

Thousands of these workers are already asking to join your union. Even before this, the UAW has been expanding its reach to workers in auto plants in—from auto plants to casino—to casino—casinos. *[Laughter]* You can tell I don't spend much time there. *[Laughter]*

But guess what most people don't know what the UAW represents? Researchers in higher education and workers. And because of this union, I'm pleased and proud that you expanded the UAW to include 5,000 researchers at the National Institute of Health—UAW workers.

I, honest to God, have always believed that the union movement in America is important because it produces the best skilled workers in the world. That's what happens. It's good for everybody. It's good for companies. It increases the quality of the jobs, the quality of the products. And it's good for economic growth.

In fact, I asked—which is unusual for a President to do—I asked the Treasury Department to do a significant study—the most comprehensive report ever—detailing how unions are good for all workers, including nonunion workers; how they found that unions raise standards across workplaces in industry, improving skills and save—pushing up wages, strengthening the benefits for everyone.

It matters. It matters, it matters. And some in corporate America are finally beginning to figure it out.

And look at what we're doing—what's good for workers and companies. Since I took office, we've attracted billions of dollars in investment here in the United States. We supercharged advanced manufacturing, including electric vehicles made by union workers in America.

China is determined—*[applause]*. China is determined to dominate that market, with EV predominantly made in China and Chinese jobs. The previous administration consent—was content to sit on the sidelines and let China take all these jobs, but I won't let that happen. *[Applause]* I will not.

That's why I—*[applause]*. That's why I pushed and drafted the CHIPS and Science Act, investing more than \$50 billion in manufacturing semiconductors here at home.

Automobiles today require 3,000 chips—of these chips to be made. That's why my bipartisan infrastructure law is building a network of 500,000 electric vehicle charging stations all across America, installed by your brothers and sisters at the IBEW. That's who is doing it.

And that's why the Inflation Reduction Act—which, the other team, not a single person supported—that I signed into law—dramatically—is a dramatic incentive for the Big Three and other auto companies to make it here—their future here in America with American jobs, jobs that we want to make union jobs.

That's why I announced \$12 billion to help companies that respect their workers implement a just transition to electric vehicle future. Because I strongly believe that companies transitioning to new technology should retool, reboot, and rehire in the same factories in the same communities with comparable wages. And existing union workers should have the first shot at those jobs.

As Shawn said, I appointed a historically pro-union National Labor Relations Board, because I don't believe any company should be using threats or tactics to stand in the way of workers' rights to organize. Period.

And, folks, you've been very patient, sitting a long time. But these investments are paying off.

Since I came to office—by the way, the last guy said he's looking for—he's hoping for a recession——

[At this point, the President made the sign of the cross.]

——*[laughter]*—because he does not want to be the next Herbert Hoover. He's already Herbert Hoover. *[Laughter]* He's the only President other than Herbert Hoover who lost jobs when he was President.

Look, since I came to office, with your help, we've created 14 million new jobs—14 million—nearly 800,000 manufacturing jobs nationwide. And that means we're creating American jobs and exporting American products instead of the other way around, like we saw for too long.

Unemployment has been below 4 percent for the longest stretch in 50 years, and it's going down. Wages are up; household wealth is up.

We have the lowest inflation and fastest recovery of any major economy in the world. We have the fastest growing economy in the world.

I know we have more to do. And we're making real progress. Over the last year, prices are down on everyday items from a gallon of gasoline to a gallon of milk. And folks are beginning to feel it.

Last week, we saw one of the biggest jumps in how positive consumers are about—feeling about their personal circumstance. But we have more work to do.

But our plan is delivering for the American people, building an economy from the middle out and the bottom up, not the top down. That's what I said I was going to do—that's what I tried to do as a Senator and Vice President—but because, when we do that, the poor have a ladder up and the middle class does well, and the wealthy do well. Although, they should be paying a hell of a lot more in taxes.

We all do well. It's called Bidenomics. If you notice, all the major economists who are talking about "there's going to be a recession next week, next month"—they're all of a sudden—they're seeing the Lord. *[Laughter]* I'm a little worried; some of the major economists in American history are now giving me credit. You know, it's like, "Oh, God, what's going on?" *[Laughter]*

But look, all kidding aside. This is a fundamental break from what used to be called trickle-down economics. And some Democrat Presidents did it as well as Republican.

You know, I sat—not a lot trickled down on my dad's kitchen table growing up. There wasn't a lot. The idea was, if the wealthy do very well, there will be a lot left over, and it will trickle down to ordinary folks. Well, guess what? That trickle-down economy was supercharged by my predecessor.

He cut taxes for the very wealthy and the biggest corporations. They shipped good-paying jobs overseas because labor was cheaper. It shrank public investment in infrastructure and education—invested less. It hollowed out entire communities, closing factories—I'm not making this up; you know this to be true—closing factories, attacking unions, and leaving too many Americans behind.

In fact, when Donald Trump was in office, six auto factories closed around the country. Tens of thousands of auto jobs were lost nationwide during Trump's Presidency. During my Presidency, we've opened 20 auto factories and more to come. We've created more than 250,000 auto jobs all across America.

And while I stood in solidarity with you on the picket line—as your president said, I went to the picket line; Donald Trump went to a nonunion shop and attacked you. *[Laughter]*

Let me tell you something I learned a long time ago. If I'm going to be in a fight, I want it to be in a fight with you, the UAW—with you. *[Applause]* No, no, I mean it.

We have a big fight in front of us. We're fundamentally changing the economy in this country. And everybody is getting a little worried about it, the very powerful. Some are seeing the light.

But changing the economy—taking it from an economy that takes care of those at the top and changing an economy that gives people who built this country a fair shot. Getting back to my dad, all anyone wants is just a fair shot—just a fair shot, an even shot to be able to make it. That's what my economic plan is all about. That's what the UAW is all about. That's what the—your battle has been about.

The days of working people being dealt out of the deal are over in this country as long as I'm President. Working people are going to get their fair share. You've earned it, you fought for it, and you deserve it.

So today I want to say to all of you: Thank you, thank you. I could not be more proud or more honored that you've chosen to stand with me.

Audience members. Joe! Joe! Joe!

The President. For all the progress we've made together, you're the real hero. I mean—I want to make it clear: You're the heroes of this story. It's not what I did; it's what the American people standing up with backbone did. You're the reason why. And I mean it sincerely.

I'm supposedly an expert in foreign policy. I've known every major world leader for the past 25 years. And guess what? As I tell every world leader, remind them, whether they're an adversary or an ally, it's never, ever, ever been a good bet to bet against the American people—never, never, never.

And that's been true throughout history, and it's still true today.

Because of you—I mean this—because of you, I've never been more optimistic about America's future. We just have to remember who we are. We are the United States of America.

And I mean this: There is nothing beyond our capacity when we work together. We're the only nation in the world that's come out of every crisis stronger than we went in.

So God bless you all, and may God protect our troops, and God bless the American worker.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Every time I'd walk out of my grandfather—leaving his house up in Scranton, he'd yell, "Joey, keep the faith." And my grandmother would come to the door, and she'd say, "No, Joey, spread it." Let's spread the faith.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:30 p.m. during the United Auto Workers National Community Action Program Conference at the Marriott Marquis Washington, DC, hotel.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign event with United Auto Workers.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Fain, Shawn; Trump, Donald J.

Subjects: Automobile industry, strengthening efforts; District of Columbia, Democratic Party event; Economic improvement; Electric and hybrid vehicles, promotion efforts; Electric vehicle charging infrastructure, improvement efforts; Inflation; Job creation and growth; Labor movement and organized labor; Manufacturing industry, domestic investment; National Labor Relations Board; Research and development; Semiconductor manufacturing; Unemployment rate; United Auto Workers (UAW).

DCPD Number: DCPD202400039.